

REPORT of the MEDICAL OFFICER of HEALTH

For the Year ending December 31st, 1907.

To the Chairman and Members of the Council.

GENTLEMEN,—

I regret that my report for the past year—1907—is not so satisfactory as in 1906. We have experienced a most extraordinary time. We have had no extremes of cold or heat, and the humid atmosphere has not as usual helped our death-rate. March was a splendid month, and also September, but the weather has been variable throughout. Generally there have been rainy days, and in the last two months bitter easterly winds. Here are the statistics of the monthly rainfall:—

Inches.	Inches.	Inches.
Jan., 1·02 ...	May, 3·62 ...	Sept., ·89.
Feb., 2·11 ...	June, 2·44 ...	Oct., 5·76.
March, ·93 ...	July, 2·30 ...	Nov., 3·08.
April, 4·11 ...	Aug., 2·51 ...	Dec., 5·8.
Total, 1907, 34·57. ...	1906, 36·86 ...	1905, 26·17.

The registered number of births was 194, as against 229 in 1906, 255 in 1905, 213 in 1904, and 258 in 1903. A great drop, and although there are always plenty of children, almost babies, running about the streets, it is interesting to notice that, although we have 2,973 inhabited houses, the population of the town is only 11,240. This is between three and four to a household. I am glad that the habit of having large families is decreasing; but these figures are too low for the number of inhabited houses. The male births were 98, and the female 96—again a normal proportion between the sexes. There were 10 illegitimate births—5 in the Workhouse and 5 in private houses. This is an improvement on 1906, when 14 such were registered. The general birth-rate is far below the average of England and Wales, although that has decreased. It is now only 17·26, as against 20·37 in 1906, and 22·27 in 1905.

We have had a great increase of notifiable disease—31 cases in 21 houses. In 1906 it was 16 cases in 14 houses. In the last two months of the year measles have been very prevalent, and I have advised the closure of several elementary schools. Writing in February, I believe that the epidemic has passed away, and every school is now in full swing. We have not, I think, had the scourge of Influenza until the month of December; one death only has been notified, but we have it with us now.

The Zymotic death-rate is very much higher. Worrying cases of Diphtheria constantly cropping up, and Scarletina also. It has been almost impossible to connect one case with another, except when these occurred in the same house. We have tried unceasingly to trace the source of the diphtheria cases, but we are unable to account for this. Certainly the disease has never been contagious to children outside the infected house. Your Inspector has been a great help to me in endeavouring to trace these matters.

The notifications were: Scarletina, 16; Diphtheria, 12; Anthrax, 3; Erysipelas, 4. Total, 35. Of these 6 were treated in the Isolation Hospital. Each case has recovered, and the Hospital at the end of the year is empty.

The deaths registered in 1907 were 164. This is

14 more than in 1906, when 150 were registered. I will comment on this later on.

I append the tables of time, age and causation:—

I.				
	1904.	1905.	1906.	1907.
Jan., Feb., March ...	47	45	44	59
April, May, June ...	40	43	49	39
July, Aug., Sept. ...	32	25	28	29
Oct., Nov., Dec. ...	41	43	29	37
	160	156	150	164

II.				
	1904.	1905.	1906.	1907.
Under 1 year ...	15	20	16	27
From 1 to 5 years ...	5	8	4	8
„ 5 to 15 years ...	6	4	10	3
„ 15 to 25 years ..	6	2	3	7
„ 25 to 65 years...	46	42	44	42
Over 65 years...	82	80	73	77
	160	156	150	164

III.				
	1904.	1905.	1906.	1907.
Zymotic Diseases ...	2	8	6	14
Other Septic ...	1	3	6	1
Tubercular ...	18	6	10	11
Malignant ...	16	11	5	8
Apoplexy ...	8	11	15	6
Nervous System ...	5	7	8	0
Circulatory System ...	19	16	18	29
Respiratory Organs ...	22	25	20	35
Digestive Organs ..	5	7	2	7
Excretory Organs	9	10	5	0
Alcoholism and Cirrhosis of Liver }	1	2	3	1
Premature Birth ...	5	5	3	5
Age ...	41	39	36	27
Injuries ...	0	3	4	2
All Other Causes ...	8	8	9	18
	160	156	150	164

IV.				
	1904.	1905.	1906.	1907.
Zymotic Diseases—				
Enteric Fever ...	0	0	0	0
Measles ...	0	0	1	3
Scarlatina ...	0	0	0	1
Diarrhœa ...	2	1	3	3
Whooping Cough ...	0	2	0	7
Diphtheria ...	0	2	2	0
	2	5	6	14

V.			
Causes of infantile deaths:—			
	1906.	1907.	
Zymotic ...	2	11	
Congenital ...	5	5	
Malnutrition ...	2	0	
Respiratory ...	4	7	
Other Causes ...	3	4	
	16	27	

Thirty-nine deaths have been registered from public institutions. : From the Union Workhouse, 28, of these 13 were non-residents; from the Victoria Hospital, 11, one being non-resident in the district.

I have calculated the death-rate on a population of 11,240, as last year. I have no data to go on, but I think this is correct :—

	1904.	1905.	1906.	1907.
General Death-rate				
per 1,000 living...	14.32	13.901	13.34	14.59
Ditto, allowing for				
Non-residents ...	13.159	13.012	12.01	13.34
Zymotic Death-rate	.179	.267	.533	1.245
Infantile Death-rate				
per 1,000 Births	70.15	78.43	69.86	139.175

I fear this is an unsatisfactory report. The rise in the general death-rate is largely accounted for by the increase of deaths from zymotic disease, and the infantile death-rate, which is very discouraging. There is also a very slight rise in the deaths from malignant disease. The deaths from tuberculosis are practically the same. We have had a large increase of deaths due to the diseases of the respiratory organs. I think the fog, which was so prevalent in the latter part of the year, may account for this.

Our water supply is still excellent in quantity and quality, and our drainage system has been extended to the advantage of the town.

The number of inhabited houses has increased, and more are being erected. The ventilation of many houses is most unsatisfactory. Many have

windows which cannot be opened, and owners should be compelled to rectify this.

The general sanitary work in your district will be found in the detailed report of your Inspector, whom I must thank for the promptitude and efficiency with which he deals with all my recommendations.

The Isolation Hospital has again been of great service, and in one case I am sure the chance of a large epidemic of scarlatina was prevented by prompt removal of the cases to the Hospital. I must reiterate my request for another ward—which has been promised, and I would suggest that a building, which could be erected for small expense, should be built on the Board's premises near the Hospital, for the disinfection of beds, bedding, etc. We find it difficult to carry this out efficiently in private houses.

I still wish to impress on your Council the necessity of insisting on water flushes for all closets. Owing to the rainy weather this summer I have had less complaint from inhabitants of stench from the low-lying sewers. If all closets were provided with a proper flush I should probably have none.

I have had several samples of water sent to me. In every case I have had the town water substituted.

The bakehouses, milkshops, dairies and cowsheds have been inspected, and few faults have been found.

I thank you, gentlemen, for your unvarying courtesy, and the sanitary staff for their prompt assistance in all cases.

Your obedient servant,

FREDERICK PARSONS,

Medical Officer of Health.

February 24th, 1908.

**FROME URBAN DISTRICT
COUNCIL.**

REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

For the Year 1907.
